

Athlete's Foot: An Overview

Moiz Abbas

1st Year MBBS, Islamabad Medical and Dental College, Islamabad, Pakistan

Key points:

- Introduction
- Cause
- Common skin issues among athletes
- Prevention

Introduction

Athlete's foot (tinea pedis) is a common fungal infection that affects the skin on the feet, particularly between the toes. It is caused by dermatophytes, a type of fungi that thrive in warm, moist environments, such as sweaty socks, shoes, locker rooms, and public showers. Around 15% to 25% of people are likely to have athlete's foot at any one time. The infection can spread to other parts of the body and to other people.¹

Causes

Athlete's foot is caused by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.²

Swimming pool users and industrial workers may have increased risk of fungal foot infection. However, one survey found fungal foot infection in only 8.5% of swimmers, with the highest incidence (20%) in men aged 16 years and over.³

Common Skin Issues Among Athletes

Athlete's dermatoses are a wide group of skin diseases that may occur as a result of specific conditions to which people who practice sports are exposed. Some skin diseases are characteristic of specific sports, while others may occur regardless of the type of physical activity performed. Mechanical damage to the epidermis, excessive humidity, contact with pathogens

and exposure to various environmental factors play a key role in the development of these diseases.⁴

Dermatoses are a common problem among athletes due to exposure to various chemical substances, close skin contact with other individuals and higher risk of abrasions and skin trauma.⁵

Prevention

Topical Antifungals:

Creams and ointments such as Clotrimazole, miconazole, and terbinafine are commonly used to treat fungal infections like athlete's foot, ringworm, and jock itch. These are applied to the affected area, usually twice daily until the infection clears.⁷

General Measures

Hygiene: Keeping the affected area clean and dry is crucial. Washing with antifungal soap can help.

Protective Measures: Wearing breathable clothing and shoes, and using shower shoes in communal showers can help prevent reinfection. Avoiding Sharing Personal Items: Not sharing towels, shoes, or other personal items can prevent the spread of infection.⁸

Skin diseases may affect athlete performance and require them to cease professional training and close contact with other athletes. Physicians must remember

the necessity of an accurate diagnosis and prompt initiation of the treatment to avoid delay in practice, team training and competitions.⁶

References

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